

# Beat the **Heat**, Check the Backseat!



Heat is the number one weather-related killer in the United States. NOAA National Weather Service statistical data shows that heat causes more fatalities per year than floods, lightning, tornadoes, and hurricanes combined. Based on the 10-year average from 1994 to 2003, excessive heat claimed 237 lives each year. By contrast, floods killed 84; tornadoes, 58; lightning, 63; and hurricanes, 18.

## Children, Adults, and Pets Enclosed in Parked Vehicles Are at Great Risk

Each year children die from *hyperthermia* as a result of being left in enclosed, parked vehicles. Hyperthermia is an acute condition that occurs when the body absorbs more heat than it can dissipate. This can occur even on a mild day. Studies have shown that the temperature inside a parked vehicle can rise rapidly to a dangerous level for children, adults, and pets. Leaving the windows slightly open does not significantly decrease the heating rate. The effects can be more severe on children because their bodies warm at a faster rate than adults.

## Child Safety Tips

- **Check to make sure seating surfaces and equipment** (child safety seat and safety belt buckles) **aren't too hot** when securing your child in a safety restraint system in a car that has been parked in the heat.
- **Never leave your child unattended** in a vehicle, even with the windows down.
- **Teach children not to play** in, on, or around cars.
- **Always lock car doors and trunks** -- even at home -- and keep keys out of children's reach.
- **Always make sure all child passengers have left the car** when you reach your destination. **Don't overlook** sleeping infants.

## Statistics

- Total number of U.S. hyperthermia deaths of children left in cars, 2011: **16**
- Total number of U.S. hyperthermia deaths of children left in cars, 2010: **49**
- Total number of U.S. hyperthermia deaths of children left in cars, 1998-present: **510**
- **Average number of U.S. child hyperthermia fatalities per year since 1998: 38**

An examination of media reports about the 494 child vehicular hyperthermia deaths for a thirteen year period (1998 through 2010) shows the following circumstances:

- 51% - child "forgotten" by caregiver (253 Children)
- 30% - child playing in unattended vehicle (150)
- 17% - child intentionally left in vehicle by adult (86)

**It doesn't have to be extremely hot for temperatures to rise fast in a vehicle. On an average sunny 80 degree day, temps will rise to higher than 110 degrees inside a car in 30 minutes, and to over 120 degrees in an hour!**